# RESTORATION REVIEW

## FROM CALF TRAILS TO HIGHWAYS

*Change is difficult to come by, for people find comfort and security in doing and thinking the way they always have. Change is often risky, and most people do not like to take chances. Reformers soon learn that change can be realized only as people have the maturity to admit the wrongs of the past.*

**Volume 6, No. 2** **February, 1964**

**Volume 6, No. 2** **Leroy Garrett, Editor** **February 1964**

## FROM CALF TRAILS TO HIGHWAY

The confusion that stems from the divisions in the modern church has likenesses to the winding calf trails that threatened to become the direction for a modern highway. The meandering paths beat out by the calves and their herdsmen became the orthodox guidelines for all future activity across their hallowed ground. The ox carts went the way of the calf trails because that was the way people had always gone. Then came the covered wagons, and they too took the same winding course. Even the stage coaches bowed to orthodoxy.

When gravel and asphalt roads became necessary for the era of trucks and automobiles, there was no question but what the new roads would follow the way of the calves. For generations tradition dictated this labyrinthine course. It was not until plans developed for a modern highway that the winding ways of tradition began to be questioned. Thinking people realized that change was necessary, that the whim of the calf must yield to the theodolite of the surveyor.

Change is difficult to come by, for people find comfort and security in doing and thinking the way they always have. Change is often risky, and most people do not like to take chances. Reformers soon learn that change can be realized only as people have the maturity to admit the wrongs of the past. The prophets of Israel saw this clearly, emphasizing the fact that “We and our fathers have sinned” (Neh. 1:6). Isaiah was able to see the holiness of God once he realized the measure of his own guilt and that of his people: “Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips” (Isa. 6:5).

Once change is in prospect it is important to have guidelines that direct one to higher levels of attainment. Those who trod the cow paths need the instruments of the engineer if they are to have the highway. Those of us who wish to escape the maze of brotherhood strife and division must look for *principles* to lead the way. In this special sense we are to be *men of principle.* Educators concede the difficulty of teaching people to think in terms of principles. Like the familiar calf trails, most people choose to live by rules-of-thumb, which calls for no thinking.

Our pioneers were attracted to the principle-laden motto “In faith, unity; in opinions, liberty; in all things, love” as a valid guideline for their reformation. What did they mean by “In faith, unity”? What can this mean to us in our struggle to get away from the meandering paths of factions and fractions onto the highway of the fellowship of the saints and the communion of the Holy Spirit?

"In faith, unity" can mean to us that *in matters of faith we will be of one mind*, while in matters of opinion there will be freedom for wide diversity. But this cannot mean that we will think the same way about everything that is in the Bible, for "In faith" cannot be made to refer to all revelation. People do not see the Bible alike, whether in the church or not, and they never will. If that is the unity we are looking for, it will never come. The pioneers could not have understood "In faith, unity" to mean that Christians are to understand all the subjects of the Bible the same way.

Yet it is this kind of thinking that keeps us in the calf trails. Many suppose they can draw a circle for *faith* and list within it all those doctrines that are essential for unity; the other things that are not "clearly taught in the Bible" may go within the circle of opinion. The trouble here is that you have a lot of disagreement as to what should go in the two circles. What one brother calls a matter of faith another calls a matter of opinion. Instrumental music, premillennialism, classes for Bible study, church buildings, colleges, fermented grape juice, and a score of other things are moved from one circle to another like clowns at a sideshow, depending on what faction among us is drawing the circles.

We will never reach the highway that leads to unity with this kind of thinking. "In faith, unity" must point to *the faith* of the gospel, the grand proposition that "Jesus is Lord", which is the only basis upon which all Christians can unite. If I get into the business of drawing circles, I cannot place anything within the circle of faith that God has not made a condition for salvation. I shall write into the circle: *belief in and obedience to the gospel*. (1 Cor. 15:1-2)

This brings us to the question of what is meant by the gospel, a question that must be answered if we move toward the highway. The notion that "everything in the New Testament is the gospel" is a cow path we must forsake. The gospel was a reality, both preached and obeyed, long before there was a book called the New Testament, or even before the first word was written. Peter preached the gospel on Pentecost almost a generation before the first book of the New Testament was composed, and something like 60 or 70 years before John laid down his pen on Patmos. Thousands of saints lived and died without ever having seen what we call "the New Testament".

Surely we cannot argue that one must obey "all the New Testament" in order to obey the gospel, for thousands of people believed and obeyed it who never so much as saw one single part of the New Testament scriptures. The gospel is "the thing preached" (1 Cor. 1:21 in Greek), a particular set of facts regarding a person, Jesus Christ, that constitute *the good news* that man can be saved. It is irresponsible to speak of the books of *Jude* or *Revelation* as part of the gospel. If "all the New Testament" is the gospel, then John, an exile on a lonely island, is the only apostle that preached a full gospel! And only those who lived *after* John wrote *Revelation* could fully obey the gospel. But before the New Testament

scriptures were composed the apostle Paul "fully preached the gospel of Christ" (Rom. 15 :19). He details the gospel in 1 Cor. 15:1-4.

One believes the gospel when he accepts the testimony that Jesus is the Christ, and he obeys the gospel when he is immersed in water for the remission of his sins (John 20:21, Acts 2:38). It is this that saves his soul and makes him a Christian. The New Testament scriptures are for his Christian growth; they are "the apostles' doctrine" by which he is perfected as a saint, and of course the Word of God even though distinct from the gospel (Acts 2:42).

What I am saying is this: "In faith, unity" is to mean to us that oneness is achieved *in Christ*, which is ours by God's mercy when we believe and obey the gospel. One is begotten when he believes the gospel (1 Cor. 4:15) and is born into God's family when he obeys the gospel (John 3:3 5). When we believe the one fact that Jesus is Lord and obey the one act of immersion into Christ, we are saints together — "In faith, unity." I know of nothing else to place within the circle of faith, for God has made nothing else a condition to being saved.

Quite obviously doctrine is important to us, but it is in this area that there must be latitude for differences of opinion. We will never be united if we insist on singleness of mind on all doctrinal matters. We must accept a man as our brother if he has obeyed the gospel irrespective of how right or wrong he may be in doctrine. This is not to say that his doctrinal errors do not matter, but only that they do not matter in regard to his being accepted as a brother (Rom. 14:1) . Once I receive him as my brother, I can as I have opportunity help him out of his errors as he in turn can help me out of mine. But it is not in the area of doctrine that we find unity, for unity is in a Person. As we study the Bible together we must make room for differences of interpretation — "In opinions, liberty", but the unity that we seek is based upon *the gospel,* which is testimony about what Jesus Christ has done for us. In believing and obeying that testimony we become one together in Christ, which leaves no room for opinion.

"A highway shall be there, and it shall be called the Holy Way; the unclean shall not pass over it, and fools shall not err therein." (Isa. 35:8) — *The Editor*

*The feeling of the law, the satisfaction of being right, the joy of self-esteem are powerful incentives for keeping us upright or keeping us moving forward. On the other hand, if you deprive men of them, You transform them into dogs frothing with rage. How many crimes are committed merely because their authors could not endure being wrong!* — ALBERT CAMUS

⁂ ⁂ ⁂

## ON BEING A FREE PERSON

"You, my friends, were called to be free men; only do not turn your freedom into license for your lower nature, but be servants to one another in love." (Gal. 5:13)

It is difficult to live in a carnal world without being carnal, and it is hard to be a part of a sectarian brotherhood without being sectarian. But both are possible *with God.* One cannot rise above the materialism of this world without drawing upon the spiritual resources that God supplies. Neither can one be free of sectarianism except by the strength that comes from God.

"I have strength for anything through him who gives me power." (Philip. 4:13)

This point may be illustrated by reference to the man who commented to me that it is almost impossible for a man to keep his mind clean when there is so much filth thrown at him every hour of the day. He had reference especially to the alluring "sex appeal" advertising on TV, radio, magazines, billboards, newspapers; and to the way women dress and conduct themselves on the streets and on dates. Even shoe polish, floor wax, and automobiles cannot be advertised except by reference to some feminine beauty. And yet the good man is expected to keep his thinking clean! This can hardly be in our kind of world, the brother insisted.

One can talk the same way about the desire for money and property. It is virtually impossible to be "free from the love of money" in a culture that places such importance to it. Mammon is truly a god, and who is it that does not do some prostrating at his throne? Most of us are in a rat race, and is it not to gain the almighty dollar? We must confess our failure to "lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven" in our mad dash for more money. Even with the whole family working, which is so often to the neglect of spiritual things, we still are not content with what we have.

"No servant can be slave to two masters; for either he will hate the first and love the second, or he will be devoted to the first and think nothing of the second. You cannot serve God and Money," (Matt. 6:24)

What can be said of trying to live in a money-mad, sex-crazed world can be said of trying to live in a factious religious brotherhood. They are parallel in their tremendous erosive effect upon the spirit of man. Jesus referred to the *choking* influence of "worldly cares and the false glamour of wealth" (Matt. 13:22), and Paul refers to the "time of troubles" as the time when "men will love nothing but money and self" (2 Tim. 3:2).

As for our sex-crazed world, the Bible seems to be addressing our own nation when it says: "They have eyes for nothing but women, eyes never at rest from sin" (2 Pet. 2:14), and let us not forget that Jesus refers to "this wicked and adulterous generation" (Mk.

8:38). Billy Graham may have it right when he says that America is on the biggest sex binge of any nation in history.

How can one live a pure life in such a world? We repeat that the only answer is the one Paul found: "I have strength for anything through him who gives me power." The problem is the same in respect to sectarianism. We can say "everybody is doing it" and find comfort in doing it too. Or we can choose the more difficult course. Some college leaders speak of "the vanishing virgin," and some surveys (such as the *Kinsey Reports*) indicate that sexual virtue is indeed a rare commodity among young adults.

I am convinced that a *free* religionist, one who is motivated by the deep convictions that come from his own growing soul rather than sectarian orthodoxy, is likewise a rare commodity. The temptations to be sectarian are just as real as those of the glamorous world. The "party man" is accepted and respected, and *he has a job!* The one thing that man cannot stand is *rejection,* for this strikes at a most basic psychological need. I sense this keenly when one of my children comes in from play with a broken heart, crying: "They don't want to play with me!" A grownup who is rejected by his peers at church or a preacher who is ostracized by his party's leading paper has the same problem. Loyalty is the price for party acceptance, and it is so easy to equate loyalty to the *party* with loyalty to *the Christ* — when there may well be a big difference between the two!

James Russell Lowell's often-quoted "Truth forever on the scaffold, wrong forever on the throne" may not be an overstatement, and the free man will agree with Lowell when he adds:

"Yet that scaffold sways the future, and, behind the dim unknown,

Standeth God within the shadow, keeping watch above his own."

While we have Lowell on the phone regarding the question of freedom, we can ponder these words from his *A Fable for Critics:*

I honor the man who is willing to sink
Half his present repute for the freedom to think,
And, when he has thought, be *his* cause strong or weak,
Will risk the other half for the freedom to speak.

Jesus promises us that truth will make us free, but he never suggests that freedom is the easy way. As Lowell avows that the freedom to think and speak has for its price a man's reputation, so Jesus contends that the way of freedom has a small gate and a narrow road.

"Enter by the narrow gate. The gate is wide that leads to perdition, there is plenty of room on the road, and many go that way; but the gate that leads to life is small and the road is narrow, and those who find it are few." (Matt. 7:13-14)

I appreciate the way the discerning Emerson expressed it:

"God offers to every mind its choice between truth and repose. Take what you please — you can never have both."

Ponder those words! Believe them! Surely no man is ready to be free who is not willing to sacrifice repose for truth. — *The Editor*

⁂ ⁂ ⁂

## WHY I AM A DISCIPLE-AT-LARGE

"I give you a new commandment: love one another; as I have loved you, so you are to love one another. If there is this love among you, then all will know that you are my disciples." (John 13:34-35).

How wonderful it is to be a disciple of the Christ! It means more than to be a pupil at the feet of the Master, for it means to be his follower in his work of love. To the Jews who had believed on him, Jesus said: "If you dwell within the revelation I have brought, you are indeed my disciples" (John 8:31). To be a disciple indeed, what a blessed relationship!

To be a disciple indeed might well involve being a disciple-at-large. By "at large" I mean ecumenical, and by that I mean *being in the fellowship with all those who are in Christ*, with no lines of brotherhood being drawn because of differences in interpretation.

I find this approach a bit confusing and embarrassing to my associates in all of discipledom. People like for things to come in neatly tied packages and with proper labels of identification. Most of us have a lot of pigeon-holes in our mental makeup, and we like for things to fit into their proper slot. Men and things that do not fit get in our way. Thinking is less complex and easier when everything fits. For it to be otherwise is like having pieces left over in a jigsaw puzzle.

So insistent are people for the stereotypes that they themselves will affix a label on the man that chooses to wear none. It is not that they mean harm by this always, but rather that they do not know how to think any other way. Everyone must be tagged with some sectarian label. They cannot see that it makes any sense otherwise. I myself have had some interesting experiences along this line, choosing as I do to be a disciple-at-large.

Born and bred as I was in the anti-instrumental wing of the Restoration Movement, I have for most of my years been easily identified as "Church of Christ", a label I wore with little or no reluctance. But once I began to roam "at large" and discovered a greater brotherhood, I issued a disclaimer, insisting that the "Church of Christ" concept of fellowship is much too restricted. The *loyal* papers, meaning "Church of Christ" journals, announced that I had "gone to the Christian Church", though some were less sure as to where I had gone, one announcement using the caption, *Garrett is gone!*

So well spread was the news that I had gone to the Christian Church a few years back, that when I returned from Illinois one summer to a lot of my old haunts I did not find one person that had not heard it. It became a source of both amazement and amusement to my wife and me. When we drove into the backwoods to see a sister who we supposed never got out of her neighborhood and hardly ever saw a brotherhood journal, my but they had to stick me in some classification, so I had to be “Church of Christ”. My wife remarked that it was all contradictory: one group charging that I had gone to the other, while the other group insisted that I belonged to the group I had “left”!

At least one brother, however, has clearly understood my position as a wife remarked with some assurance, “Well, here’s one old friend that will not have heard that you’ve apostatized to the Christian Church!” But sure enough she had! We hardly got into our visit with her before she said, “I hear you’ve gone to the Christian Church.” She must have wondered what a digressive preacher was doing coming to see her!

At this same time I was filling speaking engagements at a number of Christian Churches as well as Baptist, Methodist and others as opportunity afforded. It was this kind of behavior on my part that quite obviously set up the rumor that I had “gone” somewhere, for *loyal* gospel preachers simply do not do things like that. But the interesting point is this: these Christian Churches thought of me as “a Church of Christ man.” Even when I was professor at Bethany College I was never accepted as a “Disciple” in the International Convention sense. During my second year at Bethany I was invited to speak at the Memorial Christian Church, which is the only church of any kind in that little hamlet, and which incidentally has a sign that reads “Church of Christ”. On the printed programs that Lord’s Day I was introduced not merely as professor of philosophy at Bethany College, but as “a Church of Christ minister”.

My wife and I got a charge out of that, for I had made it a point to be simply a disciple of Christ, refusing to identify myself with any party within discipledom to the exclusion of others. Despite my efforts I was categorized. The good Bethany brethren were well aware that I had not joined the “Disciple” party, as the “Church of Christ” party had charged, disciple-at-large. I was at a unity gathering at the Disciples of Christ Historical Society a year or so ago where several groups of “Campbellites” had sensible and helpful discussions on fellowship and brotherhood, but they were mostly “Disciple” and “Independent”, though they were trying to get away from these labels and rightly so. During one of the sessions a professor from Cincinnati Bible Seminary looked across at me and said something like this: “Take brother Garrett there, for example. You can’t call him a ‘Disciple’ or an ‘Independent’, and I know for a fact that the ‘Church of Christ’ won’t claim him. And yet he accepts all of us as his brothers. What is he if he is not simply a disciple-at-large, as he puts it? While he fully accepts all of us, none of us seem to be

able to fully accept him since he does not identify himself with any of us. Maybe we need to be like he is."

One thing is certain about all this: *if one does not line up with a party and be a party man, he will never be accepted by that party.* Moreover, he should not expect to be. Logic is against one who would have it any other way. If one is a free man, he cannot expect the treatment of a party man. Parties would lose their reason for existing if it were any other way. A party can tolerate anything except a free man, whether it be grain storage scandals or a total collapse of personal integrity. Things can be patched up or overlooked so long as one is loyal to the party, but once a man behaves as one who might have a liberated mind, he must be cut off at once, regardless of any intellectual excellence or personal magnanimity he might have.

This means that the party will from time to time lose some of its keenest minds, but it has no choice but to do so, for if it tolerates free thinking it will destroy itself. It will of course talk glibly, and sometimes even profoundly, of freedom and liberality, and even of *liberal education,* but it cannot possibly take such talk seriously. While it is in order to give lip service to Christian liberty, no party man can afford to do anything about it. If he does, he will be destroyed, for the party machinery is so effective that a brother can be "marked" overnight, with proper scriptural precedent of course.

When a party man writes for one of the journals, speaks at one of the college lectureships on an assigned topic, or preaches a trial sermon, he knows exactly what he will say before he ever prepares his lesson: *he will follow the party line!* It is understood by all concerned: those who assign him his topic also know what he will say, and those who listen or read know what he will say. He may provide a slightly different approach or a different emphasis or offer some new illustrations, but it most certainly will be parry stuff. It is always interesting when that one man in a thousand, supposed to be a party man, turns out to be free. It can electrify something like a college lectureship, such as it did in Abilene a few years ago when a brother from Colorado departed from the party script.

It is always predictable what will happen to such a one. Just now there is a brother in a party different from the Abilene group who is speaking *freely* to his people, who are of course right about everything while the rest of us are wrong, and who for that reason will not have anything to do with anyone who does not interpret the Bible as they do.

He asked me what I thought would happen to him with his people. There is absolutely no question about what will happen. Just as our physical body rejects any foreign substance that is incompatible with it, so does a party throw off any element that threatens to destroy it. It cannot behave otherwise and remain a party. How quickly will this happen? Just as quickly as it becomes clear that one is *not* a party man any longer. The party will allow one of its adherents to be a little cantankerous and critical. A little individuality may

even be encouraged and appreciated. But one certainly cannot depart either from the spirit or the doctrines of the party creed, whether written or unwritten. It would be suicidal.

An interesting thing about the party mind is that it cannot see itself as factious and divisive. The party man who reads this article is hardly able to apply it to himself. A party is incapable of seeing itself as a party. Such self-evaluations as *loyal*, *faithful*, and *the Lord's people* are sincerely employed. Others are necessarily heretics or dishonest — or perhaps simply not as intelligent as the ones who have "the truth".

I have said all this in order to point out that I am a disciple-at-large so that I can be a brother to *all* God's children, including those that cannot accept me because of their party affiliation. If my discipleship were restricted by party lines, then I could receive only those who wore the same label as myself. — *The Editor*

⁂ ⁂ ⁂

*Organs, Candles, Dr. Baxter, and Stuff . . .*

## SOME REFLECTIONS

Robert R. Meyers

One of the bulletins printed each week by the congregation where I worship happened to fall into the hands of Dr. Batsell Barrett Baxter, an unusually capable Church of Christ minister. Dr. Baxter wrote an "open letter" in the *Gospel Advocate* for November 8, 1962. He addressed an unnamed group of Christians, pleading that they think carefully upon certain views expressed in the bulletin being mailed out to them. With the courtesy one expects from this fine person, he refrains from naming the congregation and he remonstrates without any touch of rancor. His thoughtfulness is deeply appreciated, but there is probably no Christian in the Riverside congregation of Wichita, Kansas who would object to having the congregation's identity known. Since none of us here believes in his own infallibility as an interpreter of Scripture, we are glad to have the opinions of others available for study. We know that one's own views need a corrective force operating against them if they are to achieve balance and stability.

Our brother was concerned about comments in our church bulletin which showed that many of us consider the use of a mechanical instrument in worship a matter of opinion, rather than of faith. We can hardly see how it *can* be a matter of faith, since faith comes by hearing or reading and we neither hear nor read anything about the instrument in the New Testament. Any discussion of the instrument must necessarily fall in the realm of opinion. The rehearsed response to that statement, of course, goes like this: Whatever is not of faith is sin; the instrument is not "of faith" (i.e., cannot be read about in Scripture); therefore the instrument is sinful if used in worship. But the response is wearing thin and not many are

willing to grant it much power these days. All of us know too well that there is also no word on baptismal tanks, electric lights, public address systems, song-books and communion trays, although all of them play their respective roles in our corporate worship services.

The truth is that it is becoming increasingly clear to many in the Churches of Christ that our arguments against the instrument are for the most part not arguments at all, but quibbles. I can say this without a trace of embarrassment, because neither I nor the congregation with which I worship have even the remotest desire to introduce a mechanical instrument into worship. I have said to many here that no one would protest more quickly or more strongly than I if some group in this congregation tried to introduce an instrument against the conscience of even *one* person. But I now understand better the discomfort I experienced as a boy preacher reading the printed debates between the "digressives" and our own "sound and loyal" brethren. It never seemed to me that the non-instrumentalist won quite so convincing a victory as our side claimed he did. I dared not formulate my doubts too clearly because I was then committed by training to my party more strongly than I was committed to the objective search for truth. So I was able to keep my mind from believing that which it was not possible for me to believe and be a "sound preacher." It would have been fatal to my hopes. I wanted to be a party champion, and was encouraged in this wish constantly by those who taught me.

I now know no arguments strong enough to permit disfellowshipping over an instrument. I say this, I repeat, with no thought of using one in any worship service with which I have to do. I am in a college chapel where three times weekly an organ plays during the singing of hymns. I dislike the combination. Far from "bringing in an organ," I would urge my own strong preference for *a cappella* singing. So, I know, would most disciples in the congregation where I worship. But since we find no divine law directed against the instrument, we refuse to consider our Christian brothers who use one as being in hopeless error. We feel that if God could speak clearly and to the point about the sins of gossip, lying, theft, murder and adultery, he could also speak clearly and to the point about instrumental music if it were a damning error. He did not do so. We conclude that its use is a matter of opinion, to be worked out among children of God in a spirit of love and forbearance.

A disturbing thing to me is that not a few teachers and ministers in high regard among the Church of Christ share this view, but fear to speak it publicly. I know for an absolute fact that there are men on the faculties of Church of Christ colleges who feel this way about the use of the instrument. Only recently I have heard, via an unimpeachable source, that an unusually capable Bible teacher told his students in a Church of Christ college that the Greek language offers no help at all in our efforts to brand the instrument as sinful. Our

attempts to use and abuse *psallo* will not stand the scrutiny of honest and trained minds, he argued.

I cannot refrain from asking a question of all such men: How long shall the masses of Church of Christ people be deprived of your insights in such matters? Isn't it time to say openly and frankly how weak our position is, so that we may be saved from charging our closest religious kin with wilful and pernicious error?

The old "law of exclusion" argument is brought up by Dr. Baxter in his gentle rebuke to us. This argument has been inconsistently employed for decades. If one is really serious about excluding an organ only because the New Testament says nothing about it, then he must also exclude the baptismal tank, the lights, the songbooks and communion trays already mentioned.

The rehearsed response to that statement is well known to all of us: "The tank, lights, books and trays are all *aids.* They play no active role in the service. But the organ makes noise, and it is an *addition."* In other words, the addition of a public address system as an aid in amplifying the voice and thereby making the service more effective is all right. But the addition of an organ to increase the beauty of the service is an "adding to" and is all wrong.

One hardly knows what to do with an argument like this, because if it really does make sense to a man, it will probably be impossible to refute it. If one believes that God will send men to punishment over such semantic subtleties as this, no amount of logic is likely to have any effect upon him.

But since there is spreading disillusionment about the validity of some of our arguments on this problem in times past, it may be of value to consider some things. Insofar as the organ adds beauty to a service, it functions exactly as do our other beautifying objects in the church building. Having once yielded to the baptismal mural or the anodized aluminum communion set, we have already admitted the validity of aesthetic concern. If we can have a richly carpeted platform, with matching decor, and curved and gilded communion tables, we can hardly object to the instrument on strictly aesthetic grounds. It may not please one's own particular sense of beauty, but he no longer has the right to deny this kind of concern on the part of his brother.

Insofar as the organ aids singers to get a tune, it functions exactly as do our tuning forks and pitch pipes. That quaint old argument that the tuning fork has sense enough to get quiet when the worship starts will hardly appeal to modern churchgoers. The worship is in progress at the time the pitch pipe is blown. A mechanical noise is heard in the building. It is an unauthorized noise. Yet who among us would regard it as a sinful innovation over which brothers ought to split? Actually, the fact that the organ makes sound — short or prolonged — is of little importance. A neon light buzzes throughout many of our services, and a public address system hums. The noises are slight, of course,

and I am descending to the kind of scholastic quibbling often employed by those who detest the organ, but the point is that relativity of this kind surely cannot matter greatly to God. He is attuned to the melodies of the human spirit, not to physical noises of any kind (including those of our throats), and what really matters to Him is the harmony that comes up from that spirit.

Insofar as the organ assists in quieting an incoming audience, it functions exactly as do our stained glass windows, our carpeted floors, and our usher who whispers, "Quiet inside, please." It is used to create a quiet, worshipful atmosphere and since we have already accepted the use of several objects and techniques for that purpose which are not mentioned in Scripture, we can hardly challenge the organ except on grounds of personal preference.

Before we turn from musing on this point to other matters, perhaps it would be helpful to some dissenting reader if I repeated that the congregation which listens to such views as these does not intend to have a mechanical instrument in its worship. Some would be extremely uncomfortable with one, in view of their backgrounds. Others have no objection, but prefer our tradition of purely vocal music. But we have no thunderbolts from heaven to hurl against our brothers whose preferences differ on this matter. Who will provide us with the clear and indisputable "Nay!" which would mark the instrument as unalterably condemned by God?

### *"But How Far Will You Go?"*

Our brother Baxter worried about "how far we will go." In twenty-three years of preaching, how famous that phrase has grown for me. When the church I knew as a boy wanted to put a rubber "runner" down the aisles, some local and area evangelists wondered "how far" we would go. "It's not just this runner, brethren, but what comes next that concerns us," they said. The convenient thing about this "how far will you go?" argument is that it distracts attention from the issue at hand and projects it to some potentially horrible future. When a bogey man is created on the distant horizon, people forget all about the harmlessness of the present plan and are promptly frightened away from it.

But my home church, like your home church, was not sufficiently frightened, for after a while we all digressed to carpets on the platform, indirect lighting, modern buildings, church kitchens, baptismal murals public address systems, handsome guest ledgers, central air conditioning, and well-equipped nurseries. Oddly, once we had these things, the evangelists simply enjoyed them along with the rest of us. But they kept up their posture of defense against "sectarian innovations" by attacking all sorts of conveniences which other religious groups had, but which were still in the future for us.

Dr. Baxter asked us, in his kindly note, whether candles would be next. I find this interesting. Suppose they were, for aesthetic reasons only, what then? Is the baptismal mural all right, but candles all wrong? I find candles in the Bible sooner than I find the

incandescent bulb. And since the bulbs most of us use are so shaped or concealed as to increase the beauty of our surroundings, we have already admitted again the correctness of aesthetic concern. So if we wished to put candles on the communion table just because they look nice there, should this be cause for alarm? Wouldn't this be purely a matter of our own preference? The truth is that candles would frighten some of us because we have not used them for aesthetic effect. Like so many things that were wrong when I was a boy (kitchens, carpets, stained glass), we must wait until we have them and then, miraculously, they are all right.

Many of these things are feared because they are put to what we consider to be improper uses by others. But it is a mark of insecurity to be put off from benefits simply because some abuse them. The most sacrificial Christian saint I ever knew, an elder, once offered to buy prayer cushions for those who felt that by kneeling they could better speak with God. A deacon, whose spiritual sensitivity seldom revealed itself, declared that it was too much like Catholicism to him and that he would quit church at once if they were bought. The elder would not so offend a brother, and dropped his suggestion at once. His spirit was commendable. But when do we begin the serious task of *teaching* some brethren who are so easily and unnecessarily offended? Paul said to avoid offending them, but in the next breath he said, Teach them! If our preachers and colleges and journals do not teach the weak brothers who are offended at anything they have not had before, how will they ever become strong brothers? We need to read Romans 14 more carefully.

What our present position means, if we pander forever to the "weak brother," is that we are bound eternally to limp along with one who may come to enjoy holding us back. Our weakest link forges our strongest taboos and prohibitions. It was surely not meant to be so. The admonition to study and to grow must mean something. I have observed many times that the weak brother (self-styled when he wants to win a point; actually he really thinks he is strong, and that others are weak) has the biggest club ever given to a human being in institutional circles. Every time something is done to which he objects, he simply says, "That offends me, and causes me to fall, and you mustn't offend your weak brother." So we must stop. There must have been, in God's marvelous wisdom, some way to call a halt to this. And there is, in Paul's own words: Teach him! If he stays weak too long, perhaps he is enjoying his weakness overly much. When that becomes obvious, perhaps we should pay less attention to the anguished cries that ascend every time we try to take one more painful step toward increasing the beauty of our services, or making them more relevant to the society in which we live.

Akin to the "how far will we go?" argument is the "hole in the dike" remonstrance, which suggests that unless we denounce the instrument and any other practice not officially sanctioned in our party, we shall very soon let in an ocean of vile and evil practices. The whole ocean does not necessarily come flooding in unless no one attends to

the dike at all. One *can* regulate the flow. Why pretend otherwise? We do not see that viewing the instrument as a matter of opinion, for example, must lead us directly to open membership. We immersed an adult Presbyterian the other day, after explaining why we could not accept him as a participating member otherwise. We find no law governing frequency of observance of the Lord's Supper (nor can anyone), and we are charitable toward brethren who interpret this matter differently from ourselves, but we still continue weekly communion as an expression of love for Christ, and we have never even considered a change.

We feel no compulsion to hold joint services with our Christian church brothers. We acknowledge their sincerity and the proofs of their commitment to Christ, even when we realize that differences in interpretation might strain a closer fellowship. We wish only to be free Christians, who can believe what the Bible seems to us to teach without being frightened by those who say we are outrunning good sense and departing from the Christian community.

It is not so much where such independent spirits will go, left to their own freedom and good sense, as it is, Where will their fiercely authoritarian brothers *drive* them? Can we not have a thought which is true to our own reading of Scripture? I am fearful that if one says, as Dr. Baxter does, that these folk will let the whole ocean in because they have made a small hole in the dike of Church of Christ traditions, they will lose respect for the cogency of brotherhood opinion. If coercion is then tried, they may be driven farther than any of them ever wanted to do.

⁂ ⁂ ⁂

## BOOK NOTES

We recommend *The Unity of the Spirit* by Carl Ketcherside, which is a permanent book containing all the issues of *Mission Messenger* for 1963. This represents some of Mr. Ketcherside's most brilliant essays on the meaning of religion and the nature of Christian fellowship. The price is only $2.95. Because of a special pre-publication offer, this office will send along with this book the monograph by Leroy Garrett on *Alexander Campbell and Thomas Jefferson,* or one year's subscription to *Restoration Re*view, for yourself or someone else. But we must have your order at once, for the deadline on this offer is March 1.

*New Possibilities for Disciples and Independents* by A. T. DeGroot is a 112 page paperback which is most descriptive of the conservative Christian Church, which DeGroot calls “Church of Christ No.2”. If you are interested in how a religious body divides and becomes a plurality of denominations, something that our people are experienced in, then this book will hold peculiar interest to you. Some references are made to “Church of Christ No.1” by way of comparison. $1.25

*The Human Rift* by Noel Keith is another little book (125 pages) that will prove edifying. The “rift” is the alienation that comes between man and God because of sin, which in turn causes frustration and anxiety. Keith points his reader to the “finding of one’s self” through self-denial. He speaks wisely of the need to escape the deification of desire, realizing that desire cannot be eliminated completely, or at least this is not the proper approach. It is only $2.50 in hard cover.

If there is any error in our record of your subscription, please inform us. You may know that according to our record your subscription has run out if your copy is stamped “Your Sub Expires With This Issue.” Your subscription is valid until this notice appears.

When you are renewing, please inform us that it is a *renewal*. Otherwise we treat all names sent to us as new subscriptions, which requires the cutting of a plate.

It is very important that you inform us of change of address, giving both the *old* and *new* address. It costs us ten cents for each change of address supplied by the post office, which is prohibitive for our budget. If your address is incorrect, please inform us.

We are gratified with the response to our last issue. Hundreds of new subs have come in. Since this is a new beginning for *Restoration Review,* now that it is issued on monthly basis, we need your help as never before. We want readers from all backgrounds of Christian Churches (Disciples, Independents, Churches of Christ) since much of what we have to say concerns them especially. But we also want the journal to go to anyone who is searching for more light, whatever his religious persuasion, if any at all. We make no claim of having all *the truth,* or even most of it, but we are in the search for truth, and we are eager to share with all those who are like-minded.

For this reason *Restoration Review* will always present material of general interest to the religious thinker. Much time and thought goes into the production of every issue, and many sources are drawn upon in order to present something substantial for our readers. But all this will bear fruit only to the extent that the paper is circulated and read.

We solicit your warm-hearted support. Show the paper to others. Share *your* copy. Make up lists of names at only 50 cents each. Some write us that all they have to do to get subscriptions is show their copy of *Restoration Review.*

Subscribe for others that believe in thinking for themselves, but who need encouragement. In clubs of six or more the rate is only 50 cents a year per name. Many have sent us $3 and six names. All of our readers can do this; many of you may choose to send a longer list.

If you have friends that would appreciate receiving a sample copy of this paper, send us their names and addresses and we will see to it that they receive an examination copy.

To some of you this issue of *Restoration Review* will be a sample copy. If you wish to subscribe, send $1 to us at 1201 Windsor Dr., Denton, Texas,* and your name will go into our files for a full year of the journal in addition to this sample number.

SPECIAL NOTICE ON BUNDLES:

Anyone ordering *Restoration Review* in multiple number (two or more each month) will receive his copies in a separate wrapper. This not only gives you extra copies to pass to others, but it keeps them cleaner and fresher. We encourage more of you to send us orders for bundles at only ten cents per copy. This means that for $10 we will send you ten copies monthly for the year, or for $2 we will send you two copies each month (in an envelope). Only multiple subs will be mailed in a wrapper.

Bear in mind that all readers are invited to share in *Truth Seekers' FORUM* by sending questions or comments to Curtis Lydic, 1703 Loop 288, Denton, Texas. Editor Lydic will not have room to run everything sent in, but everything is given careful attention and a representative selection is made. So get into the act. Keep him busy. College profs do not have anything else much to do anyhow!

The editor plans to attend the fellowship forum in Wichita, Kansas, March 5 and 6. For information on this meeting contact Henry Hill, 1819 W. Douglas, in Wichita. The editor will share in a forum on unity for all segments of disciples at Brite School of Religion, Texas Christian University, Fort Worth, on March 17. This is a luncheon gathering beginning at 11:30. The editor will remain to address one of Prof. A. T. DeGroot's classes in the afternoon. If you would like to get in on this meeting, check with Jack A. Gardiner, Brite School of Religion, T.C.U., Fort Worth, Texas.

Back numbers of the *quarterly* Restoration Review are available at three for $1 or ten for $3, while the supply lasts.

*How do you like this 20-page issue of the new, monthly Restoration Review? Presently we are offering this journal for only $1 per annum, or in clubs of six or more at only 50 cents for each name. This we can do only because some concerned disciples are willing to give a little more in order for this journal to circulate for a price within the easy reach of all. Let us take advantage of this by giving this paper the widest circulation possible. Here is a ministry that has for its purpose the cementing of brotherly relations among all*

*disciples of the Master and the enhancement and liberation of the Christian mind. Join our ministry by sending us a list of names at once.*

*Restoration Review*, 1201 Windsor Dr., Denton, Texas*

Leroy Garrett, *Editor*

* Current Contact Information:

Leroy Garrett, 1300 Woodlake Drive, Denton, TX 76205

leroy.ouida@worldnet.att.net

⁂ ⁂ ⁂

## HONEST INTERPRETATION?

In discussions with some who do not believe in the existence of a literal, physical Hell, I have been told that it is a serious mistake to take literally such references to and descriptions of post-expiration torment such as are found in Luke 16:1931 (the rich man and Lasarus), Matthew 13:40-42, or Revelation 20:11-15. On the other hand, the same people said, it is just as serious an error to take as only *figurative* such passages as those which refer to the battle of Armageddon, to the thousand year reign of Christ, or to the number 144,000 as mentioned in Revelation 7:4-8. The criterion for such discriminating interpretation seemed to be a prior commitment to viewpoints which require such interpretation. To one who does not share their viewpoint, their interpretations do not seem entirely foolproof, to say the least, and their way of switching from the literal to the figurative application does not seem entirely logical.

A similar experience has been afforded me through study with members of the denomination with which I have been long associated, and it makes me wonder whether we are not all to some extent guilty of the same type of improper rationalization. Allow me to quote some examples.

A couple of years ago I became convinced that in the instruction of Paul to the church at Corinth regarding their gift for the famine-stricken saints of Judea, there is actually no implication that the practice of “laying by in store” was to be continued after his arrival. He speaks of his coming in terms of picking up their gift for delivery to Jerusalem. Furthermore, there is no instruction for any collection other than this one for the benefit of

the Judeans. It thus occurred to me that, if this indeed were only a temporary practice, Christians would be under no obligation to continue in it today. I have, upon further study — private and public — concluded that this is the case. However, when discussing this matter with some Christians I find that they are not inclined to receive my idea favorably; and, while they do not oppose my reasoning in actual argument, they continue to maintain publicly that "we are commanded to lay by in store upon the first day of the week." Thus they deny the validity of my interpretation of this scriptural matter, and in effect deny my right to thus rationalize.

The same reaction occurs whenever the doctrine is challenged which says that *weekly* observance of the Lord's Supper, on Sunday, is mandatory for Christians, or is "the only safe way." It is denied that one has the freedom to rationalize upon the silence of the scriptures in this matter and thus judge for himself as to the essentiality of it.

The principle of consistency would lead one to expect the same Christians to reason similarly in other matters, but not so. Like the people mentioned in the introduction of this matter, these brethren arbitrarily rationalize in interpreting some New Testament commands, while determinedly opposing such rationalizing in the matters already mentioned.

As examples of New Testament commands from which some Christians excuse themselves, please consider the following:

1. 1 Corinthians 11:6 (Revised Standard Version) "For if a woman will not veil herself, then she should cut off her hair; but if it is disgraceful for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her wear a veil" The instruction has to do with worship, and explicitly teaches that the woman should be veiled. This commandment is not taught, much less enforced, among those who maintain rigidly that weekly, first-day communion and contribution are bound upon us today.
2. 1 Corinthians 14:34 (RSV) "... the women should keep silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak . . ." 1 Timothy 2:11, 12 "Let a woman learn in silence with all submissiveness. I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over men; she is to keep silent." In *every* church with which I have ever been associated during the eighteen years of my Christian existence, there have been women who learned not in silence, but with free speech; who did speak, often; and who took occasion to teach lessons on the subjects under consideration in adult Bible study classes. Furthermore, I do not recall a single instance in which they encountered any interference from either preachers or elders.
3. James 5:14,15 (RSV) "Is any among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith shall save the sick man, and the Lord will raise him up; and if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven." What a valuable service for the elders to render a

member of the flock! Yet I have never known of a single case, within the denomination with which I have been associated, of this command being observed in practice.

Every time one of these commands is brought into discussion, the brethren rationalize their way around it. Ancient "customs," no longer in practice, are mentioned as having helped to inspire these commands, and so the commands are no longer appropriate, etc. So the reasoning goes.

I am not suggesting that these commands should be observed today — I feel that they had mainly a contemporary significance. But the point is that there is no justice in reserving for one's self the privilege of reasoning one's way around a commandment while denying that privilege to someone else. The same authority which enabled Paul to write the command of 1 Corinthians 16:2 enabled him to write the commands of 1 Corinthians 11:6; 14:34; and 1 Timothy 2:11, 12; and enabled James to write the command of James 5:14. The same liberty which permits other Christians to rationalize about the last four passages cited permits me and anyone else to judge (for ourselves) how to interpret and apply 1 Corinthians 16:2 and 1 Corinthians 11:26.

## QUESTIONS

*Truth Seekers' FORUM* is different in that it does not try to answer questions raised by readers. It only passes the questions along for other readers to consider, who in turn may send us their comments for this column. By means of such an exchange all may be stimulated to further study.

Here are some of the questions we have received:

*Does the New Testament teach that a murderer must give his life? Does it teach capital punishment? I have been taught that after the flood, the Lord laid down capital punishment to preserve mankind. Is it wrong if we do not have capital punishment?* — M. B.

John and Joe are both Christians, sharing a common hope and faith. But they differ on some matters: John believes in tithing while Joe does not; and Joe objects to Bible classes and does not attend them, though he attends worship with John. Moreover, Joe supports orphanages while John objects to this. While neither endorses everything the other does, they can nonetheless enjoy fellowship with each other.

*Is there anything unscriptural about their relationship or anything wrong with this view of fellowship?* — M. Friendly

## THE INDIVIDUALITY OF UNDERSTANDING

How utterly impossible is the suggestion of some that unity may be achieved by trying to "see the Bible alike." One who has paused to contemplate the nature of human life should know better. If the world should last another million years, and if men should surpass anything formerly accomplished in the realm of human relations, so that sympathy and mutual understanding flourish, there will still be no two humans who react identically to anything.

Walt Whitman wrote that "There was a child who went forth every day, and the first object he look'd upon, that object he became, and that object became part of him for the day or a certain part of the day, or for many years or stretching cycles of years." Whitman perceived that each individual is the result of all his experience, which begins in the womb and continues through every year of his life. His unique experience is one of the clearest reasons for his individuality. Two people may share an experience, but in a very important sense it is a different experience for each.

We appreciate differences in background and make allowances for them in matters where these differences are obvious, but we need to understand that for every obvious difference there are possibly a hundred subtle differences. These also have their effects upon our relationships, especially in communication.

Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote of the complications of communication and pointed out that when John and Peter are in conversation, there are actually six individualities involved. There is the person John thinks of himself as being, and there is John as Peter sees him. Then there is the true John, which neither Peter or John fully understand. Then there is Peter as conceived by himself, as conceived in the mind of John, and finally Peter as he really is, understood by neither.

The difficulties of successful communication are easily appreciated if one accepts this analysis as true. We must remember that in the scriptures communication is between divinity and humanity. There is also the difference made by the passing of nineteen hundred years. Add to this the many problems of translation, especially the subtle variation of meanings It so many words can have, and it becomes apparent that "seeing the Bible alike" is not so simple after all. — *FORUM Editor*

## ON FELLOWSHIP AND ENDORSEMENT

All parents surely disapprove of numerous acts of their children, but they do not disown them for these. Neither do we need to disown our brothers and sisters in Christ because we do not approve 100% of what they believe and practice. We may accept people without endorsing everything they do. God censured the Jews without abandoning them. Paul called the Corinthians brothers and fellow-saints while denouncing their behaviour.

He also denounced Peter's behaviour at Antioch, but their fellowship was unaffected. David did not endorse the hatred of Saul, but persisted in regarding him as "God's anointed," and would not cut him off. — *M. Friendly*

⁂ ⁂ ⁂

RESTORATION REVIEW is published monthly (except July and August) at 1201 Windsor Dr., Denton, Texas. Leroy Garrett, Editor. Transfer of second class permit from Alton, Illinois to Denton, Texas applied for. Subscription rate is $1.00 per annum; 50 cents in clubs of 6 or more.

Address all mail to: 1201 Windsor Drive, Denton, Texas 76201.*